

consolidation—again, assuming these companies make a commitment to invest in our country; again, assuming these companies make a commitment to the workers.

I think all Senators can appreciate this legislation. The Iron Range of Minnesota, and if you think of our sister State of Michigan, this is a part of the United States of America with a proud history of providing key raw materials to the producers of steel for well over a century. In these taconite mines are some of the hardest working people you ever want to meet. LTV has closed down in Hoyt Lakes; 1,400 miners lost their work. They are steelworkers, but they work in the mines. These were good, middle-class jobs. It is not just these workers who have lost their jobs; it has the ripple effect on all the small businesses, all the subcontractors, all the suppliers—all the families.

I am in schools all the time. There is such pain, such concern about the future of these families and concern for the future of their children. From my point of view, and I know I speak for Senator DAYTON, there is probably not a more important piece of legislation to introduce.

The introduction of a piece of legislation is not symbolic politics. It does not mean it passes. We have a lot of work cut out for us, but I will say to my colleague from Virginia, I thank publicly on the floor of the Senate—I certainly have called her—Secretary of Labor Chao. We are, again, in a situation right now where there is a lot of economic pain, a lot of economic desperation. The Secretary of Labor has provided the workers up there with at least some relief, which was extremely important. We were so hopeful we could get trade adjustment assistance benefits. The Secretary of Labor granted us an additional year, above and beyond unemployment benefits that workers receive through the State of Minnesota.

It is additional money for job relocation. For workers and their families to get that trade adjustment assistance is a lifeline. It gives them more time. It gives them an opportunity to think about what ladder there is for career development. It gives them some financial assistance for their families. I have told Secretary Chao—I don't know if I will get her in trouble with the administration by being so glowing about what I have to say about her—I so appreciate it and so do the people in the State of Minnesota. I want to publicly thank her.

I also want to say we are now waiting, of course, for the administration on a decision—Secretary Evans will make a decision soon—as to whether or not we will be taking some trade action to really make sure we have a future for this industry. The next big decision is going to be in mid-June about whether or not the taconite workers on the Iron Range in Minnesota are going to have a future. This industry will not survive if it is continually faced with

unfair trade practices, if it continues to face this import surge of slab or finished steel. Our taconite workers on the Iron Range of Minnesota ask nothing more than to have a level playing field. We wait for a decision mid-June.

I think steelworkers and industrial workers all across the country—and I think they will have a lot of allies—will in a strong voice say you have to take some action. For the Iron Range in Minnesota, northeast Minnesota, time is not neutral. Time moves on. It is extremely important, above and beyond this lifeline assistance, that we get serious about a fair trade policy so these workers and their families have a future.

There is companion legislation in the House. Very important work has been done by Senator ROCKEFELLER and Senator SPECTER. I think we can get some strong bipartisan support, but it is not going to be enough to just introduce a bill. We will need action from the administration and we will need legislative action if there is to be a future for this extremely important industry—which, by the way, I think is essential to our national security.

This legislation is legislation near and dear to my heart because it is so connected to the lives and people I truly love, that is to say the steelworkers and their families on the Iron Range of the State of Minnesota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will please call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask consent to speak in morning business for 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

OUR TRADE DEFICIT

Mr. DORGAN. I want to speak this morning about international trade and our growing and troubling trade deficit. In March, the merchandise trade deficit surprised economists, jumping to \$37.6 billion in that month alone. That is the latest month for which we have data. In March imports into this country increased to \$101 billion, while American exports decreased to \$64 billion.

This is a very serious problem. The trade deficit continues to balloon. We had a \$450 billion merchandise trade deficit last year and it continues to grow and grow. It increases our indebtedness in this country. Unlike a budget deficit, about which economists over strong coffee can make the point that we owe to ourselves, you cannot make the point that our trade deficit is owed to ourselves. It is owed to others out-

side this country and will be and must be repaid one day with a lower cost of living in this country. We must get a handle on this exploding trade deficit.

Let me speak to one portion of the trade issue. We are about to see the administration take a step that I vigorously oppose. I am going to offer a piece of legislation today on behalf of myself and my colleague from Nevada, Senator REID, that deals with the issue of Mexican trucks entering this country under the provisions of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement.

What is the issue? We signed a free trade pact with the country of Mexico. It has not turned out very well, as a matter of fact. We had a trade surplus with Mexico when we signed the trade pact. Now we have a \$24 billion trade deficit with Mexico. So we went from a surplus to a very large and exploding deficit with Mexico.

But one aspect of the trade pact with Mexico is the question of movement of goods and individuals back and forth across the boarder and especially the question of Mexican trucks coming into this country. President Clinton, I believe in violation of NAFTA, prescribed a 20-mile zone in which Mexican trucks could haul goods into this country for trade purposes. But they could not go beyond that zone. This administration is about to lift that and provide unrestricted access into this country for Mexican trucks. My legislation will say that is not possible, we will not allow that to happen until and unless the Administration implements certain safeguards to protect those who use America's highways.

Let me describe why this is important. Do you want to drive down a highway in this country and drive next to a Mexican truck that is pulling double the load we allow pulled in this country behind our trucks, driven by a driver who is making less than the minimum wage in this country—on average, incidentally, of \$7- to \$10-a-day salary for that Mexican truck driver; a truck that has not been inspected in most cases, if inspected, not inspected to the same standards to which we inspect trucks in this country?

This is a circumstance where the Mexican trucks are determined to be unsafe at the border crossings at which the trucks are inspected. In many cases, 40 percent are turned back because they are unsafe, do not meet standards. Is that what we want to have on American highways? I don't think so.

This is what has happened. Mexico threatened, under NAFTA, to sue the U.S. for billions of dollars per year in compensation if the U.S. did not lift this longstanding control on allowing Mexican commercial truckers to operate within the United States. President Bush has agreed to allow them to operate in the United States beyond the limit, even though the Department of Transportation says it cannot certify

the safety of any, except a tiny fraction, of the Mexican trucks that enter this country.

This month, in fact, the Department of Transportation's own inspector general concluded that the Department of Transportation's enforcement program cannot reasonably assure the American people of the safety of Mexican trucks entering this country.

Barely 1 percent of the 3.7 million Mexican trucks that enter into the United States are inspected. Of those inspected, 36 percent are declared out of service for serious safety violations. At the border crossing in El Paso, TX, there are 1,300 trucks that come across every single day. One inspector is on duty—one—and he or she can inspect about 10 to 14 trucks a day. Most inspectors work only during daylight hours, leaving crossings with no inspectors at all during much of the day.

Now Mexico still lags far behind the United States when it comes to truck safety. They do not have an effective drug and alcohol testing program for truck drivers as we do. They simply do not have it. They have no hours-of-service regulations and only recently proposed the use of logbooks for hours of service. A reporter from the San Francisco Chronicle recently drove with a Mexican truck driver. They drove 20 to 21 hours straight—20 to 21 hours. That is significant and also dangerous. That cannot happen legally in this country. I do not want that driver on the road next to my family or my neighbors or my friends or anyone else in this country who is driving.

Right now there is no way for American law enforcement agencies to access a database containing information on Mexican truckers. If a police officer pulls me over to the side of the road or pulls the Presiding Officer, from the State of Virginia, over to the side of the road, and asks to see our license, they can put that name into a database. They can figure out very quickly what we have or have not done, what is on our driving record and what isn't. If the same police officer pulls over a Mexican truck driver, he will not find any information on him because it does not exist.

Despite these unresolved issues, and despite all of these facts and figures, despite the written objections of 258 Members of the House and 48 Senators, on both sides of the aisle, the administration has said that the NAFTA trucking provisions should be implementing. They are wrong. The provisions should not be implemented until and unless we can demonstrate safety for the American people by allowing these trucks into this country. If we cannot demonstrate safety—and clearly we cannot at this point—they should not be allowed in.

I am introducing legislation to prohibit the administration from granting operation rights to Mexican motor carriers until we can ensure that they meet the safety standards we require in this country. My bill would require the

implementation of inspections and the deployment of needed resources to ensure that the trucks that would come in would meet basic safety standards.

This is not some issue where one can say: These people are antitrade, and therefore they want to stop trucks from this country or that country. This is very real. Every day, every hour, we have massive numbers of trucks coming into this country. There is evidence from California and New Mexico and from Arizona. The evidence of the number of trucks turned back for serious safety violations is overwhelming.

Mexico does not have the same standards. Their drivers can drive 20 hours a day and no one will know it. They have no logbooks. They have no drug testing. They do not have the same equipment standards as we do. It demonstrates, in my judgment, the concern that many of us have about this unfettered notion of opening up borders without making sure we have adequate safety in place for the American people. I am going to introduce this legislation on behalf of myself and my colleague, Senator REID, from the State of Nevada. And other colleagues I know will join us because there are nearly 50 Members of the Senate who have expressed their reservations about this issue.

I urge the administration to reconsider this issue. Change your mind about this. The American people don't want to be driving down a highway to pull up next to an 18-wheel truck that is hauling a load that is twice as heavy as that which could be hauled by an American trucker in this country, with a driver who has been driving 20 hours, who has never been drug tested, and driving equipment that doesn't meet safety specifications on American roads. That is not what we want on American roads and not what we want for the safety of the American people.

Mr. President, I am happy to yield to my colleague from Nevada.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada, Mr. REID.

Mr. REID. I am very happy to join with my colleague from North Dakota on this most important legislation. He has outlined very clearly the problems we have.

Let's think about this. In the United States there are 400,000 trailer truck accidents every year. Keep in mind, we have pretty strong, strict safety standards. Over 14,000 of those accidents involve hazardous materials. Do we want to add to that mix unsafe vehicles?

The trucks that have accidents in America that are American trucks are not unsafe. Those accidents are caused by driver errors, weather conditions.

We need to move forward on this legislation yesterday, not today. I certainly hope, through administrative fiat, that the President does not allow this to happen. That is our fear. That is what we have heard.

The Senator from North Dakota is really a visionary as far as legislation

goes, on what he has focused in making statements in this Chamber, what he has done as a Senator, and what he has done as a Member of the House, focusing attention on our trade deficits. It is a stealth monster. Ultimately, if we do not do something about it, it is going to destroy the economy of this country. It is getting bigger and bigger and bigger. As the Senator has outlined with the chart he has behind him, this balloon is going to continue to get bigger and bigger and thinner and thinner and finally explode. I say he is a visionary because he has talked about our trade situation. This legislation in regard to dangerous trucks is excellent legislation.

Also, we have an amendment pending on the education bill that I think says it all. What it says is we should have the House and the Senate have a joint committee and convene immediately to determine what is happening with the gasoline and fuel prices in this country.

They expect in California, which is a neighboring State to Nevada, that the price of gasoline will be \$3 a gallon this year. If we can inspect and investigate the price of chickens, can't we investigate the price of gasoline? Yes, we can.

So I say to my friend from North Dakota, I hope that when that amendment comes up—which was written by the Senator from North Dakota and on which I happily joined as a cosponsor—it is adopted overwhelmingly. I also acknowledge and appreciate his authoring the legislation that deals with these trucks, in which I happily join.

Also, as an aside, I tell him how much I appreciate him being one of the lone voices who talks continually about the dangers of this burgeoning debt we have in the form of a trade debt. It is just as dangerous as any debt we have. We need to do something about it. But it is a difficult issue to understand. It is in the background and people really don't focus on it. I appreciate very much the Senator not letting us not focus on it.

Mr. DORGAN. I thank the Senator from Nevada.

I have a couple minutes remaining. Let me point out what is happening with our trade deficit.

As you can see: With Canada, our trade deficit has dramatically increased from 1999 to 2000; China, \$83 billion merchandise trade deficit in a year; European Union, \$55 billion; Japan \$81 billion. Japan, a \$50 billion-plus trade deficit for us almost forever. Mexico—this used to be a surplus, incidentally—now the trade deficit is \$24 billion-plus.

We cannot continue to do that. We just cannot continue to run up these kinds of trade deficits.

Just for a moment, let me describe some of the circumstances of the trade deficit. When we want to ship apples into Japan, they say the apples must come from trees that are separated at least 500 feet from apples on apple trees

in the orchard that are not going to be shipped to Japan. So if we are going to ship apples to Japan, they have to be in a grove 500 feet away from other apple groves. What kind of sense is that?

We ship T-bone steaks to Japan. Guess what the tariff is after 12 years of an agreement. Twelve years after an agreement with them, the tariff is 38.5 percent on beef going into Japan.

In Korea, just as an example, we exported 4,400 cars last year. They exported 470,000 to us. One might ask the question, Where is the fair trade here? Where is the reciprocal treatment? This country needs to demand of its trading partners that they open their markets to us so we can have fair trade.

Our deficit with China is going up, up, way up. It is now \$83.8 billion. We take all their trousers and shirts and tennis shoes and jeans. They ship them into our country, and guess what. When we try to penetrate the Chinese market, we get a pitiful amount of exports into China.

People say: Hoorah, it is increasing. Hoorah, it is increasing at a minuscule level, and we have an \$83 billion deficit with them. We have to change that.

I have other things to say.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask for 30 additional seconds.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. The President says he now wants fast-track trade authority. Fast-track trade authority to do more of this? Not on my watch. Let's have some trade authority that says when we do trade agreements in the future, we do them on behalf of this country's best interests. Maybe we should put some jerseys on those trade negotiators that read: USA. We do that for the Olympians. How about doing it for trade negotiators so they remember for whom they are negotiating.

My legislation on Mexican trucking is very important. I encourage my colleagues to cosponsor it.

Mr. President, I yield the remainder of my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be 30 minutes under the control of the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS, or his designee.

Mr. DORGAN. Might I ask the Senator from Wyoming if he will yield for a question?

Mr. THOMAS. Certainly.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask the Senator from Wyoming if he would allow me to propound a unanimous consent request that at the conclusion of his 30 minutes, I have the floor for another brief statement in morning business? I believe his time will run until 11 o'clock. I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized at that time.

Mr. THOMAS. I have no objection to that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Alabama.

GOOD NEWS

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, some good news came out this week. I don't know how many people saw it. It was a report of the status of the surplus in our accounts for the United States. As it was reported in the Wall Street Journal and other organizations, for the month of April of this year, the surplus was \$30 billion larger than the surplus for April of last year. For the first 4 months of this year, it showed that the surplus was \$41 billion larger than the surplus of the first 4 months last fiscal year.

That is a rather significant event because we are in an economic slowdown. As everyone knows, a vibrant economy is the greatest motivator for creating surpluses.

There is a lot of fear out there that we may not continue to have surpluses. Since I have been in the Senate, going on my fifth year now, every projection on the status of the budget has understated the income to the Federal Government. For the last 3 years, the surplus has substantially exceeded what OMB and the Congressional Budget Office have projected for the surplus.

To me, we have one goal as a Congress and a Government: To try to make sure this economy gets on its feet again and gets humming and makes even more money for the taxpayers and for individual Americans. But at the same time, we have to look at what is happening.

The good news is that even in a time of slowdown, we have a real surplus churning out there. We have gone from a gross domestic product take by the Federal Government of 17.6 percent of GDP to 20.6 percent of GDP. The Government is taking a larger and larger percentage of American wealth to fund governmental programs.

That is a historic change. It may not sound like much to go from 17.6 to 20.6, but 20.6 represents the highest amount we have taken from the American economy for the Government since the height of World War II.

What is at work here is an opportunity for the American people to say: Great, we are paying down this debt in record numbers. We are paying down all debt that can be paid down without a penalty being paid on it. We are doing the right thing as far as debt is concerned. We are setting aside money for contingencies, \$500 billion or so for contingencies. That is extra spending.

Remember, this surplus is calculated above inflation. When they figured how much the surplus would be, they figured in that the Government would increase spending at the rate of inflation every year. So we have the rate of inflation in there, another \$500 billion for extra spending, and we are paying down debt at record numbers.

It is time for us to have at least this \$1.35 trillion tax cut. We can do that. If we do not do that, we will spend more, and we will continue to take more of the overall wealth of the American economy. It will move us into a system such as those that exist in Europe that some in this body admire and want for us.

Our economy is more vibrant. Our economy is more productive. Our people have better health care and better incomes than Europeans. Our unemployment rate is lower by and large than our competitors, even though they have so many good things to offer their people.

We are on the right track. I am pleased with where we are today. Nothing could give me greater anticipation that within hours, perhaps, we will be able to send to the President of the United States a piece of legislation that will represent perhaps the largest tax cut in over 20 years, that could allow him to fulfill the promise on which he was elected to allow the American people to keep a larger portion of their wealth, to be able to spend it on their needs for their families, and for their children.

It is a great day. I am excited about it. I hope the conferees can complete their work promptly and we can bring that bill to the floor and we can make it law promptly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS.

TAXES

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I rise to talk about taxes, which is the focus of where we are, and prior to that, to mention that despite all the discussions we have had about certain issues, this Senate has accomplished quite a bit in the several months we have been in session. That is our task; we ought to be doing that.

A number of things have happened. First of all, we abolished the Clinton ergonomics regulation. We used a technique that allows the Congress to bring back regulations that are put in and to review them, which, quite frankly, is something we ought to be able to do on all regulations. I come from Wyoming. I was in the Wyoming Legislature. There, when you have a statute passed by the legislature, the rules are then put in by the appropriate agency, and those rules come back to the legislature to see if, indeed, they are consistent with the purpose of the legislation.

That doesn't happen in the Congress. It is too bad. You can pass a law, and by the time the regulations are in, the concepts under the law can be quite different. In any event, this one was brought back on ergonomics. It was successfully overhauled in the Congress. That is good.

Of course, we approved a deficit reduction budget, a budget that still has more expenditures perhaps than we